

## EU's 'Renewable Revolution' - Does it Create More Energy Injustice in Developing Countries?

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The European Union (EU) has been, and will continue to be, an influential player in shaping renewable energy policies in developing countries. Taking the period between 1995 and 2006 alone, it has invested more than €135 million in promoting renewable energy. A European Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, has coined the term 'renewable revolution' which conceptualises the EU's dual strategies in renewable energy development: to achieve the EU's 2020 vision which ensures 20% of its energy supplies are generated from renewable sources and to address global energy poverty, in which 1.5 billion people lack access to clean energy. Do the EU's green policies a blessing or a curse to poor countries?

EU's renewable energy frameworks and documents suggest that EU and developing countries are mutually dependent in climate change and sustainability. Firstly, poverty alleviation is one of the EU's international development agenda. Chronic poverty triggers environmental depletion and climate change, but 2.4 billions still rely on wood and animal wastes to meet their energy needs. Secondly, EU considers developing countries, especially those in North Africa and the former Soviet Union countries in the east border, as 'green allies'. The EU considers these developing countries a vast untapped renewable energy potential, ranging from hydro, to solar, wind, geothermal and biomass which could be used to ensure millions of people access to clean energy. Thirdly, in order to achieve EU's own energy security and guarantee cheap energy supplies, EU relies on developing countries in providing energy as well as land. North Africa's Solar Energy Desert Plan is one of the examples.

After reviewing the EU's renewable energy frameworks and documents, I argue that the EU's renewable energy interventions in developing countries are largely driven by self-interest, aiming to achieve energy security by making use of developing countries, especially those in North Africa.

The EU's funding allocation in renewable energy outside the EU is highly uneven - more than three-quarters of the investment has been placed in the Balkans, the former Soviet Union and the Mediterranean, and only 4% spent in Asia and South America. The funding allocation is driven, not by the actual needs of the countries, but by political reasons. This is particularly the case to Bangladesh, in which only 15% population obtains access to electricity, but it receives very limited support in green investment, compared to many other Balkan states.

The EU claims that its renewable energy strategies would benefit developing countries in the long-term because green development creates job opportunities. In reality, however, the EU is motivated economically by the expanding business opportunities for renewable energy products in developing countries. The Commission emphasises the role of renewable energy sources, a sector in which the EU already has half the world market. Raising the science and technology profile of Europe worldwide would help the EU to disseminate its members' ICT knowledge worldwide.

Another critique of the EU policies is that it reinforces the supply-side energy management which fuels the EU's economic growth, without paying an adequate attention to the governance issues about how renewable energy is produced in developing countries. Action Aid complains that the EU energy plans give big companies 'a blank cheque' to continue land grabbing from the world's poor to grow biofuels to fill our tanks rather than food to fill their stomachs.

To conclude, I suggest that the EU needs to improve the transparency of its decision-making process. It should allocate the funds more fairly by targeting the actual needs of developing countries. It should also see developing countries as equal partners and help them develop their renewable potential.

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Received April 20, 2012; Accepted April 21, 2012; Published April 23, 2012

Citation: Wong S (2012) EU's 'Renewable Revolution' - Does it Create More Energy Injustice in Developing Countries? J Earth Sci Climate Change 3:e103. doi:10.4172/2157-7617.1000e103

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